- -Listing of Claims - -

Claim 1 (Currently amended). A system for facilitating coupling pipes at their ends in substantially fluid – tight relationship comprising:

(1) Clamping means for clamping around said pipe ends said clamping means including at least one screwhole for receiving at least one screw for fastening, by securing at least one nut thereon, said clamping means over gasket means and said pipe ends , said at least one screw being configured such that it is loosely disposed in said at least one screw hole prior to fastening of said clamping means;

(2) gasket means for interposition between said clamping means and said pipe ends; and

(3) retention means engageable with said at least one screw for retaining said one screw in said at least one screw hole prior to fastening said clamping means together by securing said at least one nut with said at least one screw, said retention means being positionable from the side of the shank of said at least one screw into engagement with said at least one screw to retain said at least one screw prior to fastening said clamping means together by securing said at least one nut with said at least one screw.

Claim 2. (original). The invention as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said retention means is frictionally engageable with said at least one screw to provide said retention.

Claim 3. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said retention means is positionable on the end of the shank of said at least one screw for frictional engagement therewith.

Claim 4. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said retention means comprises a member composed of resilient material.

Claim 5. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means is thin relative to the length of said at least one screw.

Claim 6. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means is composed of resilient metal.

Claim 7. (Previously presented). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means defines at least one internal opening for being positioned onto said at least one screw from the end of the shank thereof.

Claim 8. (Currently amended). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means defines at least one lateral ~~slot~~ opening for sideways positioning of said retention means upon the shank of said at least one screw.

Claim 9. (Previously amended). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means has a generally circular configuration.

Claim 10. (Previously amended). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means has a generally square configuration.

Claim 11. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 7 wherein said at least one internal opening is substantially polygonal.

Claim 12. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said retention means includes adhesive means for adhesion to said at least one screw.

Claim 13. (Currently amended). In a pipe coupling system for coupling pipe ends in substantially fluid – tight relationship including gasket means positionable on said pipe ends and clamping means fastenable on said pipe ends and said gasket means, said clamping means being fastenable by securing at least one nut on said at least one screw insertable through said clamping means, the improvement comprising:

retention means for retaining said at least one screw in place when inserted in said clamping means and prior to fastening of said clamping means by securing said at least one nut on said at least one screw, said retention means being positionable from the side of the shank of said at least one screw into retention engagement to retain said at least one screw.

Claim 14. (Previously presented). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means is frictionally engageable with said at least one screw.

Claim 15. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means is positionable at the end of the shank of said at least one screw for frictional engagement therewith.

Claim 16. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means comprises a member composed of resilient material.

Claim 17. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means is thin relative to the length of said at least one screw.

Claim 18. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means is composed of resilient metal.

Claim 19. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means defines at least one internal opening for being placed onto said at least one screw from the end of the shank thereof.

Claim 20. (Currently amended). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means defines at least one lateral ~~slot~~ opening for sidewise placing of said retention means upon the shank of said at least one screw.

Claim 21. (Previously presented). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means has a generally circular configuration.

Claim 22. (Previously presented). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means has a generally square configuration.

Claim 23. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 19 wherein at least one internal opening is substantially polygonal.

Claim 24. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means include adhesive means for adhesion to said at least one screw.

Claim 25. (Original). The invention as set forth in Claim 13 wherein said retention means is positionable upon said at least one screw from the side of the shank thereof for frictional engagement therewith.

Claim 26 (Currently amended). A method for facilitating coupling at least two conduits at their ends in substantially fluid-tight relationship comprising the steps of:

(1) providing gasket means for disposition upon said at least two conduits;

(2) providing clamping means for clamping around said conduit ends and including at least one screw hole for receiving at least one screw for fastening said clamping means upon said gasket means and said conduit ends in substantially fluid-tight relationship by securing at least one nut to said at least one screw;

(3) placing said at least one screw in said at least one screw hole; and

(4) disposing retention means ~~in connection with~~ laterally upon the side of the shank of said at least one screw to prevent said at least one screw from exiting said at least one screw hole prior to said fastening of said clamping means and said gasket means.

Claim 27. (Original). The method as set forth in Claim 26 wherein said retention means is frictionally engageable with said at least one screw to accomplish retention thereof.

Claim 28. (Original). The method of Claim 26 further including the step of fastening said gasket means and said clamping means onto said conduit ends by tightening said at least one screw until substantially fluid-tight relationship is achieved between said conduits.

Claim 29. (Original). The method of Claim 26 wherein said conduits comprise pipes.